



What will 2012 bring?



While it's clear that 2012 will not be the end of the world, that doesn't mean it will be much easier. See what challenges experts say await the world economy in the coming year.

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Crazy for mahjong

Many foreigners are having fun with one of the country's favorite traditional pastimes.

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Art in new media

See the exciting exhibits at the nation's first museum of digital art.



Pages 20-21 Options for ice skaters

The ice came late this year, but downtown skating rinks are finally open. Grab your blades and head for some of these venues.



Gov tightens controls on illegally employed foreigners

By Han Manman

The illegal entry, stay and employment of foreigners has developed into a "prominent problem" in the world's second largest economy, Xinhua reported.

To combat this, the State Council submitted a draft law to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The law would toughen the nation's exit and entry administration.

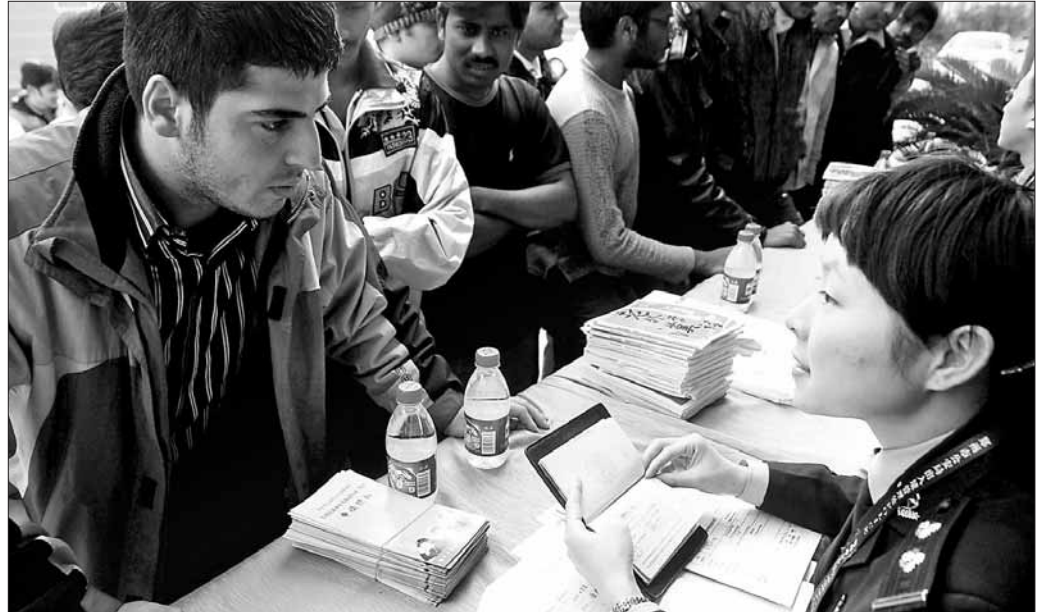
Existing laws on exit and entry were written 26 years ago, when China was far from becoming "the world's workshop." Penalties for illegal employment of foreigners were almost completely ignored, Xinhua reported.

The draft law requires foreigners to obtain work permits and residence certificates before working. Those who work illegally in China may be fined between 5,000 and 20,000 yuan.

Companies illegally providing job placement services to foreigners or illegally employing foreigners would be also fined, the draft said.

The draft also stipulates that foreigners who own companies and owe back wages to their workers in China will be prohibited from leaving the country.

According to the draft, foreigners suspected of illegal entry, stay or employment, or



The draft requires foreigners to be fingerprinted when applying for a residential certificate.

CFP Photo

those suspected of threatening national security or social order, can be detained for up to 60 days for investigation.

"We want to standardize how we manage foreigners who are working in China, increase visa scrutiny and strengthen residential management of foreigners," said Yang Huanning, the deputy minister of Public Security.

China already has a very large population of unskilled

workers. Yang said the new policy is intended to keep out unskilled foreign workers.

The draft law on entry and exit procedures would also allow the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to collect biometric information about inbound foreigners.

The draft requires foreigners to be fingerprinted by public security departments when they apply for a resi-

dential certificate.

Liu Guofu, an immigration law professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology, said the US and some European Union members such as the UK, Norway and Switzerland have similar fingerprint requirements.

Liu said the US routinely fingerprints foreign visitors as part of the visa application process, and has done so since the 9/11 attacks. The

UK has introduced biometric passports and uses facial recognition technology to reduce wait time in the airport.

Figures from the ministries of public security and foreign affairs show that the number of people entering and exiting China has increased by 10 percent annually since 1990.

In 2010, there were 52 million foreigners who entered and left the country.

Tongzhou to add US hospitals to Medical Center

By Zhao Hongyi

Tongzhou District, a rapidly developing satellite town on the east side of Beijing, is preparing to break ground on an expanded 15-square-kilometer "International Medical Center," sources from the District Congress said.

"We'll develop the center into a hub for medical research, education and entertainment within five years to meet growing demand," said Wang Yunfeng, secretary of the district.

The first phase of the medical center, a 3-square-kilometer area, is already under construction. Around 10 hospitals and two medical universities will move in when construction ends in 2015, according to the project schedule.

The center will introduce or relocate several international and foreign hospitals from health agencies with a presence in the district.

It will also move local hos-

pitals into the center when the first phase ends. Hospitals already scheduled for relocation include Luhe Hospital, Xinhua Hospital, the Hospital of Gynecology and Obstetrics, Hospital of Orthopedics, Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Hospital of Chest Diseases, Hospital of the Elderly and the Medical Education and Training Center.

The center will also encourage a number of the national hospitals and medical institutions to set up branches in the area. Planned invitees include Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Beijing Dongzhimen Hospital and the Affiliated Hospital of Capital Institute of Pediatrics.

The district is also in talks with the Cleveland Clinic; Children's Hospital, Los Angeles; and Hong Kong's Lippo International Cancer Research Center and Nursery School to

set up branches in the center.

Cleveland Clinic is famous for its cardiac care and cardiovascular surgery. It has maintained a fourth place ranking for five years in North America, according to US News & Reporting.

Children's Hospital, Los Angeles is the largest children medical center in southern California. It is acknowledged throughout the world as a leader in pediatrics and adolescent health, particularly in the treatment of children's brain tumors.

The hospital has been active in China for several years. On October 11, it set up a joint pediatrics tumor research and treatment center with the Hunan Provincial Children's Hospital in central China.

The international medical center is only part of the Tongzhou New Town project under construction, the sec-

retary said.

A new town center with four underground levels is being planned. The first two levels would be used for commercial activities and a leisure plaza, while the other two levels would be used for public transportation and parking.

The New Tongzhou Town has been under construction for years. The town is developing its tourism services to lure travelers and residents. Hotels, exhibition centers, entertainment sites and theaters will also be major projects.

Beijing is focusing on developing a total of 12 satellite cities. "We'll ensure that each town has a medical center with advanced services," said Mao Yu, deputy director of the Municipal Bureau of Public Health.

Pediatric and adolescent health is also one of the most demanded medical services in the city. Beijing is planning to

build two new children's hospitals in the next five years.

While the local government is enthusiastic and busy building the new town, citizens are more worried about the cost of these new services.

"I hope I can afford to live in the new town and receive services in these hospitals," said Wan Ling, a resident in downtown Beijing whose home is scheduled for demolition.

Medical expenses have been rising in China despite the government's attempts to build a national care network. Medical costs are one of the most discussed issues in the country, and many accuse hospitals and medical professionals of viciously pursuing profits.

"How to balance the cost in the hospitals and families' budgets will be a challenge for the government," said Wang Liping, professor of social science from Peking University.

Professor's fund to defend do-gooders in court

By Han Manman

While China's dependable economic growth may be the envy of a world in recession, the compassion of its citizens is not.

Earlier this year, the world was shocked by security footage of a young girl run down by cars and ignored by more than a dozen bystanders. At home, the video gave many pause to contemplate whether China's rush for riches has produced a selfish and indifferent society.

Tan Fang, a professor at South China Normal University, believes the general populace still has the capacity for goodwill and aid.

The professor is establishing a "good Samaritan network" and a fund that would be used to assist people who are wrongly prosecuted by the people they aid. He hopes such a safety net will encourage more people to act on their best impulses.



Tan Fang hopes his website and helping fund can encourage more Chinese to help others.

Photo provided by Southern Weekly

Wu Jundong, an assistant traffic officer in Jinhua, Zhejiang Province, was one of the many Chinese to receive aid from Tan.

Last November, the 21-year-old Wu was riding a tricycle and passed by an elderly couple who were riding an electronic bike. When the pair fell, Wu volunteered to take them to the hospital.

At the hospital, the story changed and the couple claimed that Wu knocked them down.

Despite the police report finding no evidence that the two vehicles had ever collided, a local court ruled on June 3 that Wu should compensate the victims for the "accident." An appeal on August 30 upheld the lower court's ruling.

Wu was ordered to pay 73,580 yuan in compensation, and that he would be jailed if he refused to pay.

That was when Tan came to help.

Tan examined Wu's case with his team of volunteer lawyers found that the courts had completely ignored all the facts collected by the police.

In the lawyers' explanation of the apparent failure of the courts to do their job, the local lower courts tend to ignore evidence and assume that no one would help an elderly person if they were not at fault.

"These courts want to bury the case as soon as possible rather than actually weigh evidence," Tan said.

But this approach has a devastating effect on society, scaring away the many kind people whose first impulse is to help someone in need.

Tan and his lawyer team have sent a letter of protest to the court that ordered Wu to pay the compensation.

Debate over the nation's apparent moral rot has raged over recent months.

Much of it has been fueled



When this old man fell from his bike in Nanning, Guangxi earlier this month, none to help.

CFP Photo

by the horrible death of Wang Yue, a two-year-old girl in Foshan who was crushed by two cars and ignored by bystanders. Security camera footage showed 18 people who walked, cycled or drove past her body.

Only a month early, an 88-year-old man fell on a crowded street in Wuhan, Hubei Province. When nobody stopped to help him, he eventually died of suffocation due to a blockage in his respiratory tract.

"I think Chinese society can be compared to an expanse of 'prosperous' desert," said Xia Xueluan, a sociologist at Peking University. The incidents "show society is sick and facing a severe crisis of trust. It will need 8 to 10 years to recover from the effects of this unfair court rulings," he said.

When legions began calling for legal protection of do-gooders, Tan started the

Internet-based Good Samaritan Network and established a private "Helping Risk Fund" to support those who step forward and help the elderly.

So far, Tan has raised more than 40,000 yuan. Donors include college teachers, entrepreneurs, workers, civil servants, doctors, journalists, retirees, university students and middle school students.

Several lawyers have volunteered to work with Tan to provide free legal support. The money is used to aid people who still lose their lawsuits.

Tan said the need to protect people who want to help has become a serious social issue. "[Thanks to recent incidents], some people want to but dare not. Those who dare cannot afford the consequences."

"The result of this is that many people have suffered; some have even died. And many who have tried to help have been falsely accused and

become the victims of extortion," he said.

"We need a fund like this to help the good people who place themselves at such risk to help others."

"People should not have to be afraid to help. Respecting the old and cherishing the young are traditional Chinese values," he said.

Tan said his team evaluates each case using the evidence available from court records and media reports. "When it's hard to make a judgment, we will err on the side of the people seeking help," he said.

Tan said his team has followed a dozen cases over the past month, and more than 60 lawyers and others have volunteered.

Among the recent cases was a female college teacher who helped a child who fell. The child's parents responded by battering her, and accusing her of being the one who

hurt their children.

The teacher attempted to sue the parents, but lost her case because she did not have any independent witnesses.

Based on the evidence available, Tan's team decided to help her and paid her legal and medical expenses.

"People who sacrifice themselves to save someone else should be praised, rewarded and protected to encourage more people to do good deeds," he said. He fears that the continued victimization of people who do good will make Chinese people increasingly indifferent to those in need.

"This is really something the government should be more involved in. It needs to do more to encourage people to help each other," he said.

Some cities are experimenting with laws that would protect do-gooders.

Shenzhen may become the first mainland city to pass a "Good Samaritan law" that would insulate people who provide aid from wrongful prosecution.

New draft regulations released last month would exempt those who provide aid from any legal liability for damages caused during the course of rescue barring cases of "gross negligence." The burden of proof for negligence would rest on the rescued party.

Rescuers would also be able to apply for legal aid if they are sued, and witnesses who testify about a rescue would be eligible for rewards, it said.

The draft, being circulated for public consultation, would become the mainland's first such law if passed.

"I am very happy that this regulation has come out. People have been hoping for it for a long time," Tan said. "I hope Shenzhen can enforce it. I also hope more provinces will copy this model, and that it can eventually become a national law."

Globe: What weather will 2012 bring?

Will the world end in 2012? The supposed Mayan prediction has many scared.

But while the real world probably won't be rocked by floods and huge blizzards, economists and market agencies point to a disaster of another sort: recession in Europe, anemic growth in the US and a looming slowdown in emerging economies.

2012 may be another year of muddling along.

Residents walk past decorations for the upcoming New Year 2012 celebrations in Bangkok.

Pornchai Kittiwongsakul/
IC Photo



2011 overview

The year began with a prediction.

"We have to save the euro over the next six months," said Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, when the country started its half-year turn heading the EU in January.

Europe went through the year with a flurry of high-level meetings, where leaders made bold promises to forge deeper ties and integrate the EU budgeting process.

But EU leaders failed to give the European Central Bank more power, and it's been reluctant to snap up government bonds as the large-scale lender of last resort.

Italy, Spain and other troubled European nations faced high borrowing costs, making it harder for them to

dig out of their problems.

In March, the world's economy got another shock: an earthquake and tsunami crippled the Japanese financial markets.

Meanwhile, having spent the run-up to the financial crisis insisting there was nothing risky about stuffing sub-prime mortgages into collateralized debt obligations, the credit ratings agencies finally woke up.

Moody's slashed Greece's rating by three notches to B1, while also downgrading Spain's to Aa2. In April, Standard & Poor's downgraded the US debt outlook from stable to negative for the first time since the Pearl Harbor attack of 1941.

Borrowing costs for weaker members of the eurozone continue to rise, fuel-

ing fears that further rescue packages will be needed.

In May, while the world was looking for firm financial leadership, Dominique Strauss-Kahn was arrested in New York on sexual assault allegations, forcing his resignation as the head of the International Monetary Fund.

Relief came in October as European leaders hammered out a new deal to save the euro: Merkel and Sarkozy held emergency talks in Frankfurt to cement a deal while Sarkozy flew to Germany rather than stay with his wife, Carla, for the birth of their first child.

But the much-heralded October eurozone victory suffered a setback: Greek Prime Minister George Papandreu proposed a ref-

erendum on the deal.

He was not alone. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi also announced his opposition when he learned the deal would raise interest rates on Italian bonds above 7 percent.

With Europe a principal destination for exports of emerging markets like China, its recession posed a serious risk for Asian economies.

A Chinese slowdown hit US companies operating here, as well as US exporters to China. It also hurt the big developing countries that export raw materials, such as Brazil, taking a further bite out of US exports.

This month, the year ended with a "happy new year" message from the IMF: the world is at serious risk of sliding into a 1930s-style slump.

The third eye

Things that will happen in 2012

The globe has experienced relative calm for the past 24 months. But that stability won't last much longer. The following are the things that might happen, according to Bloomberg News.

– Global food inflation will continue to be a problem. Global growth will advance by 3 percent, but the cost of feeding ourselves will increase by 5 percent. Asia – India in particular – will bear the biggest brunt of the increasing cost of food.

– Europe's economic problems will not be solved. The EU banks will struggle and there will be discussions about the scale of the governments' involvement, which will be recognized as unsustainable.

– For the US, modest economic activity and inflation above 2 percent will tie the Federal Reserve's hands for the first part of the year. Politics will prevent it from acting prior to the election. In late 2012, the Fed is likely to initiate another round of QE.

– Keynesian economic thinking will be further discredited in 2012. The pump-priming Keynesians had their day in the sun, and now people will want a different approach. Paul Krugman will write a total of 100 blogs decrying this development.

– Gold will be very volatile. It will fall to below \$1,400 at one point. It will end the year above \$2,000. Silver will follow gold up and down. It will underperform gold and won't hit \$50.

– The summer of 2012 will bring the largest polar ice melt in history. The Mayan calendar will end with no consequence.

(Beijing Today/Agencies)

Predictions for 2012

Economists bleak about coming 2012

The most likely outcome for 2012, economists say, is not optimistic.

What's most troubling about that forecast is that many economists warn that if they're wrong, it's most likely to be because they were overly optimistic.

"Unfortunately, right now most of the risks are on the downside. There's the possibility of a meltdown in the eurozone that would drag the US into recession, and probably other parts of the world as well," said Nari-man Behraves, the chief

economist for forecaster IHS Global Insight.

That's not what Behraves expects.

He puts the odds at one in five or one in four. But what happens in Europe will absolutely affect how the US economy performs next year.

Economists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch are more pessimistic than most. They put the chances of a much deeper European crisis at 40 percent.

"If it really does reach that kind of stage of distress,

we will see a mild global recession. So there is quite a risky year ahead," said Ethan Harris, the bank's co-head of economic research.

Even without a European meltdown, Harris sees the US economy slowing sharply. He projects strong growth in the final three months of 2011, well above 3 percent, but sees that braking to just 1 percent annualized growth by the final three months of 2012.

Latin America will be exposed to lower commodity prices. Central and Eastern

Europe are exposed to the eurozone. And turmoil in the Middle East is causing serious economic risks – both there and elsewhere – as geopolitical risk and oil prices remain high and constrain global growth.

"We think next year will be a slow year. It's not a 2009, unless Europe blows up. It's not a global recession, but it's not back to 2004 to 2007, when we were at about 5 percent," said Jay Bryson, an economist at Wells Fargo Securities in Charlotte, North Carolina.

China: Prepare for a slowdown

By Huang Daohen

For the world's second largest economy, 2011 was filled with many ups and downs – not just related to the declining stock market or the sluggish real-estate sector, but for everyone. Expats, for example, may now want to reconsider their future in China after a recent mandatory social welfare tax was enacted for foreigners.



It seems likely that this coming year will see the end of many China expats' careers in China due to the new tax policy.

Zhu Chunyan/IC Photo

2011 economic overview

Inflation has been the focus of the country's economic policy this year, and as of now the policy looks successful. Figures from the National Statistics Bureau show that inflationary pressure has continued to fall in the last two months.

November's consumer price index (CPI) was 4.2 percent, down from 6.5 percent in July.

Cracking down on rising housing prices was another major government initiative.

The campaign, according to Xinhua, also seems to have worked. In November, the price for a new home in 49 out of 70 cities dropped from the previous month, Xinhua reported.

There remains strong demand for quality and high-end homes as the middle class grows.

In the annual central economic conference held recently in Beijing, the government ruled that a continuing slowdown for the property industry may be needed, as well as an adjustment to new construction.

Real-estate developers aren't the only ones who might have to scale back. Medium- and small-sized enterprises in the private sector have been through a tough time due to decreasing exports this year.

Currently, the EU accounts for about 20 percent of the country's total exports. If the euro debt crisis

on the continent boils over into an economic collapse, then China will clearly suffer.

Declining exports are the greatest risk to the country's economy, and already China has been affected by weaker sales to Europe.

There was a debate throughout this year among global economists whether China would face the risk of a hard landing as its exports to EU and the US decline and if real estate adjustments come too fast.

The government is already feeling the effects of the global slowdown. In late November, the People's Bank of China, the central bank, cut the reserve requirement for its banks by half a percent.

The third eye Tips for expats eyeing China ventures

Jenny Chou, 25, sees her short-lived career in China coming to an end after New Year's.

The Chinese American came to Beijing in April and became an English teacher at a local school expecting to stay long-term, but recent changes in the country's tax policy has forced her to reconsider.

As employers have to make social welfare contributions for foreigners, Chou's boss became nervous and was faced with two options: cut the payroll or find a local teacher instead.

The new rule is expected to result in a decline of expats working in the country. A Xinhua report put the number of expats at 660,000, of which only 250,000 are paying taxes.

"Come the new year, it may be hard for new expats to gain employment in the country, at least legally," said Liu Yan, consultant at FESCO, a local HR services company.

Liu said as the country tries to move up the value chain, it simply does not need foreigners with little or no actual skills. Chinese returnees can fill many positions.

"Essential expats will remain, but recent graduates will be replaced, or simply asked to work on tourist visa to keep them off the welfare payroll," Liu said.

Chou will leave Beijing after Spring Festival. But since the economy in the US isn't much better, she's decided to try out other parts of Asia, like Vietnam.

"I learned that enterprises there are crying out for expatriates who know their way around management and related services," Chou said. "As one door closes, another opens."

For those who stay and do business in China, Liu said it's vital to know the importance of being inland.

"The reason is rather simple: when a city like Shanghai has two airports, and all the global brands are filling the shopping malls, how much more can you grow?" Liu said, adding that second-tier cities like Wuhan, Changsha and Chengdu are growing at a faster rate.

Besides, the cost for labor and raw materials inland are relatively lower, Liu said.

Predictions for 2012

Things you need to know about China

2012 will see some monumental changes in the country, foremost of which is the election of new leaders in March.

Big changes will take place, as the Party's top officials and several ministry leaders are expected to retire.

According to the country's law, minister-level workers must retire by age 65. This has already led to the retirement of several of the country's financial regulators last month.

Shang Fulin replaced Liu Mingkang as the new banking regulator, Guo Shuqing became the new securities regulator and Xiang Junbo was named insurance regulator.

The country will see a new set of senior officials who are much younger than their predecessors.

How this affects the country's economy remains unclear, but Zhao Xiao, a local economics professor, said since the current 12th Five Year Plan is already underway, it's unlikely for the new regime to introduce any unexpected legislature in the early stages.

Still, it's important for those who do business in China to be aware of the changes, Zhao said.

Zhao said the country's economic growth is expected to fall in 2012 due to the sluggish global economy.

Yu Bin, head of macroeconomic research at the Development Research Center of the State Council, agreed. Yu was quoted by *China Daily* as saying that the country's economic growth is likely to dip below 9 percent next year.

Yu said the cities in the country's eastern coastal area saw obviously slower economic growth this year, which is a signal that the potential for economic growth has started to decline.

But will the real-estate market collapse in 2012? Zhao doesn't think so. He said the current weakness was largely caused by the government's tightening measures, including purchasing curbs, higher mortgage down payment requirements and price restrictions.

"We should be surprised that sales and prices have held up at current levels after more than a year of policy tightening," Zhao said. "We had expected worse."

But Zhao said the CPI may increase again next year because of rising labor and energy costs.

Year-ender: Foreign brands struggle in China

You could call it another year of economic success: though the country's economy is set to slow, its GDP grew 9.4 percent during the first three quarters.

But for many overseas companies, scandals made 2011 a year of reckoning.



Unilever's rumor mill

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's top economic planner, fined consumer product giant Unilever Plc \$2 million (12.6 million yuan) for its high-profile dissemination of possible price hikes in the country in May.

In March, Unilever issued price increase notices to supermarkets in China, saying the company planned to raise the prices of some of its products.

According to the NDRC, public comments by Unilever in April about possible price increased "intensified price hike expectations among consumers," "led to panic buying" and "seriously distorted market order."

Rotten Apples

On August 31, a report called "The Other Side of Apple II," co-released by five non-governmental environmental organizations after a seven-month investigation, detailed claims of how Apple's Chinese suppliers, who make iPhone and iPad parts, pollute the environment.

The report alleges that 27 suspected Apple suppliers were responsible for severe pollution problems, ranging from toxic gases to heavy metal sludge. In one case, the report said, a nearby village experienced a "phenomenal rise in cases of cancer."

Apple responded quickly to the report, pledging that it would investigate all instances of alleged pollution.

Gucci workers complain

Employees at Gucci (China)'s Shenzhen store have to ask permission

from their superior before drinking water, and they cannot take more than five minutes to use the toilet, the Guangzhou-based *Xinkuaibao* newspaper reported on October 8.

Another former employee said she had to stand for more than 10 hours a day when she was working for Gucci, even during her pregnancy. She also complained that the company did not allow her to eat fruits or snacks during breaks.

Another former staff member filed a formal complaint in August, alleging that the company did not pay for overtime work.

Walmart porks up labels

US retail giant Walmart stores in southwest China's Chongqing allegedly sold 63,547 kilograms of falsely labeled pork over the past two years, generating approximately 730,000 yuan (\$114,500) in illegal income.

A total of 37 people have been implicated in the scandal, with 25 detained, seven under house arrest and three released on bail, in addition to the two who were arrested, according to local police.

The CEO of Walmart's entire Chinese operation and its head of human resources have both resigned citing personal reasons.

Siemens' refrigerator rage

On November 20, an influential Chinese blogger and his supporters engaged in a consumer rights protest at Siemens' Beijing headquarters by smashing their refrigerators with hammers.

Luo Yonghao, the lead smasher,

said on his microblog that he was having trouble closing the door of the Siemens fridge he had bought. Luo's comments gave rise to a heated online discussion as other consumers reported the same problem with their Siemens fridges.

Luo said Siemens refused to admit that some of their products had faults and that they had ignored consumer complaints.

Siemens China president Roland Gerke, in a statement on the company website, later apologized to customers for problems and promised to resolve the matter through a free visiting repair service.

Gaopeng watch scandal

Gaopeng, a joint venture between the world's largest daily deal site Groupon and China's top Internet firm Tencent Holdings, sold customers Tissot watches on its website for 690 yuan (\$109).

The luxury Swiss watches have an original retail price of more than 3,000 yuan (\$500), and customers who received the watches from Gaopeng concluded that they were counterfeit after finding them to be of poor quality.

"After an investigation into the Tissot watch incident, Gaopeng found the merchant had given us fake agent qualification documents," Gaopeng said.

Li Peixuan, a lawyer at Beijing Huijing Law Firm, commented that Tissot could also instigate legal proceedings to sue Gaopeng and its suppliers for compensation.

(Agencies)

Analyst

Investing in China in 2012

By Huang Daohen

With so many business scandals and risks, how should foreign investors get involved in the China market in 2012?

Stefanie Zhu, an analyst with local consulting firm Qingxue Market Solution, said there are three megatrends of growth worthy of investors' attention.

The first is that Chinese people are increasingly looking to travel.

According to the National Tourism Bureau, more than 50 million people traveled abroad last year. Among the \$9 billion that Chinese people spent on luxury goods during 2010, more than 60 percent of that was spent abroad.

"Chinese consumers are like the Japanese in the 1980s," Zhu said.

Investments should focus more on industries that cater to the growing travel and leisure sector, she said.

The increasing purchasing power of Chinese women is further enlarging this market, she said.

Women now account for almost half of the household income in China and have more say in daily purchasing decisions.

Zhu believes that the potential growth in China will come not from major cities like Beijing, Shanghai or Guangdong, but from smaller cities like Changsha, Chengdu and Taiyuan.

These lower-tier cities are hotbeds of growth due to decreased labor and raw material costs.

But she cautioned that global brand names that want to expand into the country's inner land should be aware of the customers' declining confidence in foreign brands.

According to a survey by the news portal Sina, more than half of the respondents said their impressions of foreign brands worsened in the past year.

More than 85 percent said the quality and services of global brands did not live up to their reputations.

Meanwhile, nearly 20 percent said the majority of brands do not apply the same standards to the market in the Chinese mainland as they do internationally. Only 5 percent hold the view that all foreign brands serve Chinese customers to the same level as they do around the world.

Zhu said that scandals and defects in foreign brands in the past years have hurt Chinese customers' confidence in them.

"Better-off Chinese consumers are now demanding quality goods with better services," Zhu said.

Worked to death

Overwork blamed for young woman's sudden death

By Huang Daoheng

Fang Yan, 23, from Zhejiang Province, was working for Datang, a Beijing-based mobile firm, when she died suddenly on December 16 – apparently from work-related stress.

According to her doctor Yu Ying, Fang died due to internal bleeding caused by a stomach ulcer, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

Yu said stress and irregular eating habits were to blame for the ulcer. "The ulcer was on the artery and caused massive bleeding that led to the death," Yu said.

Fang's symptoms had been diagnosed weeks ago. She complained on her microblog, under name of Aimee_Fang, that she was constantly working overtime and suffering severe stomachaches for the past month.

"Washing my hair before going to bed gives me migraines," she wrote. "Eating after 9 o'clock each night gives me gastric hemorrhages. I'm only 23, but so unhealthy."

Datang said in a statement that the company is usually busy at the end of the year, but working overtime is not required. The company said it granted Fang sick leave the day before she died. Fang was found dead later in her apartment by her boyfriend.

Fang's death has sparked a wave of debate over stress caused by overwork. Recent years have seen an increase in deaths from both physical and mental overwork.

In April, Pan Jie, a 25-year-old female auditor at PricewaterhouseCoopers' Shanghai branch, died of viral encephalitis, 10 days after she asked for a sick leave because of high fever.

The most notorious case occurred at the manufacturing giant Foxconn, where more than 13 workers attempted suicide, resulting in 11 deaths.

The country's law states that overtime should not exceed three hours per day, but so-called "voluntary overtime" is common.



Sidelight

When holiday means overwork

The upcoming Spring Festival means a time for family reunion, but for many office workers, it can be a time for overwork.

It's because people have to stay up late to arrange their schedule in advance of the holiday, said Shi Han, a former employee of Deloitte in Beijing, an international accounting and consulting firm.

The 27-year-old decided to quit earlier this year and became a freelancer. At the same time last year, Shi was only given a day or even half-day off a week.

"We knew about the heavy workload at the firm before we joined, but we still felt distraught," he said.

"I looked very pale that time because of the long hours spent staring at Excel tables on the computer."

"Though the money was good, I decided to quit," Shi said. "I had a serious illness after I had left the company. It was probably because I suddenly felt relaxed."

According to a survey in 2010 by the country's Medical Doctor Association, more than 65 percent of China's office workers in major cities are confronted with the risk of overwork.

For the employees in foreign companies, the figure is even higher. Nearly 90 percent of the respondents say they sinking under work pressures.



Fang Yan

Young office workers have been suffering more in recent years from sudden onsets of disease, the report said. They are susceptible to disease because they lack exercise and fail to manage their health properly.

Debate of the week

US education system a complete mess?

Peking University president Zhou Qifeng recently slammed the American education system, saying it was in "complete mess," inviting sharp criticism from the country's microbloggers who termed his comments hypocritical and arrogant.

"The US education system is a complete mess, even the president of the country hasn't learned to respect others and uses force to get others to follow his will," Zhou told a audience of students during a speech in Changsha, Hunan Province.

Zhou said China's education system, on the other hand, is a success. "The reason our country has been making progress is we keep producing talent within our education system," Zhou said.

Although Zhou later emphasized that his speech was twisted out of context by the media and was not meant as an attack on the US education system, his remarks drew criticism.

"Since US education is bad in your opinion, why did you choose to study in the US for your Master's and doctorate degrees? As a graduate of Peking University, I am ashamed of your remarks," one commenter said.

Zhou got his Master's and Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts.

Jiang Shuye, a publisher at an educational book company in Beijing, said Zhou might try to find out why more Chinese college graduates are choosing to pursue higher education in the US.

Honoring a traitor

A notorious figure of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Qin Hui is still courting controversy hundreds of years after his death.

Qin is known for his part in the execution of national hero General Yue Fei. His statue at the Jiangning Museum of Nanjing has divided public opinion.

Unveiled earlier this year, the museum invited an artist to mold statues for Qin Hui and his wife, turning their original posture from kneeling to sitting. The name of the work is "Kneeling for 492 years, Qin Hui wants to stand up for a rest."

Many argue the statue should depict Qin kneeling because he was a traitor to his country. Others argue even sinners should not be deprived of basic human rights.

Xie Zuoshi, professor at Zhejiang University of Finance and Economics, said the new statue is proper.

Qin was undoubtedly guilty and deserved to be punished, but the museum's move shows how civilized Chinese society is.

Sai Xiaotao, senior editor at Cenn.cn, said the museum is only using Qin's name to attract tourists.

(Agencies)

Comment

A balance of work and health

It's true that health is important, but in some labor intensive industries, working long hours is the sacrifice people make to earn a great wage.

Would they be willing to take a 50 percent pay cut so the companies can employ more workers to share their pressure and ensure they only work 40 hours a week?

For anyone who has a job, balancing work, life and health has always been and will always be a major concern.

— Lillian Chen, PR consultant

Bosses are responsible

Employers should take some responsibility for their workers' health. Nowadays, overwork is so common for young people. No doubt these people will suffer aftereffects. And if you're feeling sick, speak up and get some rest.

— Ren Xianwen, local retiree

Putting the cart before the horse

The incident sparked heated discussions online because many people see themselves facing the young woman's sad fate: sacrificing health and rest for work and survival, especially those leaving home for work.

Nowadays, office workers are under so much pressure that they push themselves so hard. But many don't realize that a high salary is just a means of improving living standards. Sacrificing life for income is no more than putting the cart before the horse.

— Paul Minter, American teacher

Care for ourselves

It's a tragedy to lose someone so young. No one should have to pay such a price for their work, though it is what we live by and live for. However, we should give up our habits of staying up late at night, spending too much time on the Internet, and excessive drinking and smoking. While we think we are making the best of our youth, what we are actually doing is exhausting our health.

Care for ourselves from now on. Health is the most important thing. Without health there is nothing.

— Cao Linlin, host at

Liaoning Radio and Television

Warning to workaholics

Whether Fang's death is caused by overwork or negligence of her own health, everyone should learn from this. Remember to relax when dealing with high-pressure situations.

It's also a warning to workaholics that a heavy workload should never be the excuse that keeps you from eating regularly. After all, there is always more work to be finished, but no more life to live. Only when you have good health can you work and live more efficiently and effectively.

— Robert Chen, media editor

Mahjong gaining popularity on world stage

By Han Manman

A popular saying goes that if you were to fly over a Chinese city, you'd be able to see people playing mahjong from the sky.

The modern version would require an update: you'd be able to see foreign faces as well.

More foreigners have taken up mahjong in recent years, giving this ancient game an infusion of new blood.



Mahjong is becoming popular among foreigners.

Falling in love with mahjong

This past Christmas was the first that Joe Mathieu spent in Beijing. Having arrived from the US last year, the 31-year-old software engineer for a local IT company spent the holiday with his Chinese friends.

He was invited to a Christmas party held by his friend, Xu Li. Mathieu knew there'd be mahjong, a game he loves but doesn't play as well as his Chinese counterparts.

He recalled Xu teaching him the game when he arrived in Beijing. "At that time, I hoped to learn more about Chinese culture and get integrated into Chinese society as quickly as possible," Mathieu said.

"Xu suggested that I learn Mahjong. She said the game is combines probability and skill, that it's not a simple game people get quickly bored of."

Xu even told her friend it could stave off dementia – not a concern for Mathieu just yet, but perhaps a reason why so many elderly play.

Gradually, Mathieu got the hang of it.

"Playing Mahjong requires a person to think analytically. At some point in a game, a player has to adopt a certain strategy and yet be willing to change it later on in response to opponents' moves," he said.

Mahjong is believed to have originated in China in 500 BC. The game is similar to rummy, played by four around a table using 144 pieces of tiles known as tonz.

The players' seat positions represent the four different cardinal directions. Each game



Various mahjong tournaments and championships have been popping up worldwide in recent years.

CFP Photo

has four rounds named after prevailing winds.

Players draw and discard tiles to their hand and try to form certain combinations for varying amounts of points. The game is usually played for money.

"No wonder many said Chinese are clever – maybe because they've been playing mahjong since a young age," Mathieu said.

Mathieu has become so fascinated with mahjong that he even goes online to play when his friends aren't available for a game.

"I will teach my family how to play when I back to America," he said.

Gaining popularity worldwide

Mahjong has legions of devoted fans across China and abroad. There are several variations of the game, but the basic principles remain the same.

Under the Beijing-based World Mahjong Organization (WMO), which was established in October 2005, several member organizations from China, Japan, the US, Germany, France, Denmark, the Netherlands and Hungary promote the game

in their home regions.

Various mahjong tournaments and championships have been popping up worldwide in recent years.

Mahjong tournaments in Europe are now drawing as many as 500 entrants, said Tina Christensen, president of the European Mahjong Association. The group was present in Yichang, Hubei Province last month at the 5th China Mahjong Forum and Championship.

Christensen said players travel around Europe to play all the time.

"It's very interesting to hear players of different nationalities suddenly speaking Chinese: 'chi,' 'peng,' 'gang' and 'hu,'" she said.

Christensen said players are ranked based on their performance at four European tournaments the organization holds each year.

"Our mission is to bring healthy, friendly and scientific mahjong to as many people as possible," she said.

Application for world heritage

Chairman Mao Zedong once said that mahjong is one of China's three national treasures, along

with traditional Chinese medicine and *The Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Now, a group of mahjong lovers is applying for the game to become recognized as "world heritage."

A semi-official organization under the Ministry of Culture has said it will work with WMO to prepare an application for the game to be included on the world list of Intangible Culture Heritage.

The current lobby is a second attempt to get mahjong on the UNESCO list. In 2007, the committee submitted an application to the ministry to include the game as an item on China's national intangible cultural heritage. This was considered a first step before applying to UNESCO. But the committee received no reply.

The committee expects the new application will be innovative in that it will feature multiple countries.

Ma Xiaomei, president of the Chinese Promotional Committee of World National Culture Exchange, has said that the environment will be favorable for a new application, since many local mahjong associations have worked to promote the culture behind the sport and

standardize the rules.

"The goal is to raise people's awareness of mahjong has a culture that can be beneficial to people's minds and health and elevate their quality of life," Ma said.

Ma said in recent years that the essence of mahjong has been reduced, and its image distorted. "So, there is a need to reverse that trend," he said, referring to the fact that mahjong used to be a gambling game in China.

"This is more difficult than protecting some other dying cultural heritages. As long as our application is not rejected outright, it will be a victory," he said.

Jiang Xuanqi, the secretary-general of the WMO, said the body consists of more than 20 national associations in the US, Europe and Asia that will support the committee in its attempt.

Yukari Kugimiya, a member of the Japan Mahjong Sports Association, said she supports the game's inclusion on the list.

"We need to include a social image for mahjong. I sometimes think Chinese people have the gene for mahjong. It's in their blood," Kugimiya said.

Malaysia makes its pitch to Chinese students

By Zhao Hongyi

This month, the Malaysian embassy in Beijing opened a website to lure more Chinese students to study in Malaysia.

An increasing number of Chinese junior high students are studying abroad for language and vocational studies.

The website tries to make a case for why it's better to study in Malaysia than places like the UK, US, Australia and New Zealand. Factors include lower cost, more Chinese cultural influences, looser restrictions on visas and work permits, availability of scholarships and improved services for international students.

Because of its history as a former British colony, Malaysia has very good English education programs.

A list of the major universities, high schools and vocational schools is displayed on the newly launched website.

The Embassy of Malaysia is also an active player



Chinese students are becoming a major group of visitors to developed countries with good schools.

CFP Photo

in most overseas education exhibitions held throughout China, such as the annual Overseas Educational Expo by the Chinese Ministry of Education.

The embassy is strengthening its ties and coopera-

tion with China's overseas education agencies, providing professional suggestions for interested Chinese students.

tapa Mohamed, minister of higher education of Malaysia. That figure increases between 15 to 20 percent each year.

"We hope the number can increase two or three times that within the next few

Chinese students are becoming a major group of visitors to developed countries with good schools.

The latest statistics from China's Ministry of Education show that 289,000 Chinese students went abroad last year.

There are as many as 160,000 Chinese students studying in the US, 90,000 in the UK and 25,000 in Germany.

While sending more students abroad, China is also trying to lure foreign students to study in its schools. It has opened 322 Confucius Institutes and 369 Confucius Classes around the world to promote Chinese culture.

Many Chinese educational institutions are attracting foreign students. They actively participate in education expos around the world and provide scholarships, accommodation and other support for foreign students.

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Newest round of Beijing Playhouse auditions to start

By Annie Wei

Auditions will soon begin for Beijing Playhouse's newest play, Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, which will be performed in May.

The show is considered one of the best Broadway musicals of all-time. It features classic hits like "Oh, What a Beautiful Morning," "Little Surrey with the Fringe on the Top" and "Kansas City." The story depicts a high-spirited rivalry between local farmers and cowboys.

Beijing Playhouse, the city's only amateur English theater group, is searching for 30 singers and dancers and 80 stagehands.

Anyone between the ages of 10 and 80 is welcome to give it a try. Interested parties should note that all parts will be in English.

The audition requires participants to do a live read from a script and perform a scene. For more important roles, judges may ask for an a capella song.

Those who are selected



Beijing Playhouse recruits volunteers for big-scale shows and also hosts kids' theaters during summer and winter holidays.

Photo provided by Beijing Playhouse

will need to attend rehearsals on Sunday afternoons in March and April.

The performance will be from May 18 to June 3. For more information, visit

beijingplayhouse.com.

Audition dates: February 26 and 27, 2012, 6:30 pm

Where: Mako theater in Shuangjing. Rehearsals are at Beijing University of

Chemical Technology, 15 Beisanhuan Dong Lu, Chaoyang District, a 10-minute walk from the south exit of Huixingxijie subway station, Line 10.

Event

Free dog training advice

A well-trained dog can be the difference between having a good pet experience and nightmare. Every Saturday afternoon, Doctors Beck & Stone, a veterinary clinic, in collaboration with Dennis Schenk, a certified canine behaviorist consultant, gives free dog training advice.

Where: Euro Plaza, Doctors Beck & Stone, Shop LB05, Euro Plaza99 Yuxiang Lu, Tianzhu Town, Shunyi District

When: 2-3 pm
Tel: 2886 8046
Cost: Free

Milonga el Chino

There aren't many places like Milonga. After all, where else can one learn Argentine tango? The club was started in 2007 and offers many activities to anyone interested in tango.

Where: Peanuts Café (at site of Duanqirui Government), 3 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm - midnight, every Wednesday
Tel: 6403 0688
Cost: 50 yuan, includes a drink

(By Wei Ying)



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New train rules force passengers to carry IDs

By Zhao Hongyi

After eight years of discussion and preparation, China's national railway authority finally enacted a "real-name" purchasing system over the weekend throughout the country.

The new purchasing requirements will be adopted starting at the beginning of next year.

Customers will have to present valid identification at ticket windows in order to purchase tickets. Passengers will also have to present valid ID before they're allowed to board.

If the ID of the purchaser doesn't match the ID of the passenger, the ticket will be considered invalid.

Passengers can book their tickets 8 to 10 days ahead of their departure date via person, phone or online.

The railway authority said the system will help ease ticket purchasing, which has been a huge problem for the last decade.

As anyone who has tried buying tickets to travel between the country's major cities knows, the process can be more like a lottery. Even being the first in line at a travel agency doesn't guarantee a ticket can be purchased. Speculators buying in bulk can make things difficult for everyone.

The real-name purchasing system aims to ensure everyone in need gets their tickets during the peak



The railway authority will begin its "real-name" ticket purchasing system nationwide on January 1, requiring a valid ID for those who want to buy a ticket. CFP Photo

holiday season, especially during Chinese New Year, which falls on January 23 this year.

"We'll continue the 'real-name' purchasing system after the Spring Festival throughout the country," said Wang Zaishan, a ticket seller at Beijing Railway Station.

The railway authority has promised that all passenger information will be kept confidential and erased from the database after the train completes its journey.

The most reliable way to purchase tickets is still at the actual train station. The two biggest are Beijing Rail-

way Station and Beijing West Railway Station.

The stations have built hundreds of temporary sales windows in anticipation of the upcoming Spring Festival rush.

This year, customers will have the added option of traveling via high-speed rail. According to the latest reports, 500-kilometer-per-hour trains have finished experimental runs in Qingdao, Shandong Province. When they're ready to put into use, they'll travel at 400 kilometers per hour, much faster than the current trains that go at 250 to 300 kilo-

meters per hour.

Several countries have shown interest in China's high-speed train system, including the US, Russia, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam, due to its low cost.

Hotline: 6526 0000

Booking website: 12306.cn

Valid forms of ID for expats:

Passport, residence permit, entry & exit certificate, diplomatic certificate, consulate certificate, driver's license; for residents of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, showing a travel permit from those areas will also work.

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyiing@ynet.com

Where can I go to patch up my sportswear?

You can try Sanfu Huwai, an outdoor sports apparel and gear chain (1 Nongzhan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District; tel: 6592 5827). They sell a fabric fixer. A 7 by 24 centimeter patch costs 35 yuan. You need to use a low-temperature iron and stick the fabric on the part you want to patch up. It can last up to a year. They also have more expensive materials suitable for fixing hiking jackets and tents.

I'm planning to take the GMAT this year and I think I need to take a prep course. Is there any place I can go in Beijing for that?

The Princeton Review has a good book called *Cracking the GMAT*. If you don't want to order from Amazon, you can get it from TPR Beijing: tprbeijing.com/eng.

Or you can get creative and hire a Chinese student to tutor you in math.

I heard there are several local organic produce markets. Are these regular events and where are they?

The Farmer's Market has regular events, but its location varies from time to time. Keep an eye on its Sina Weibo: beijingyoujinongfushiji.weibo.com

(By Wei Ying)

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By He Jianwei

The nation's first digital art center, the China Millennium Monument Museum of Digital Arts (CMoDA), opened on December 17 with its new Creative Future project. The season-long effort aims to connect China's digital artists with their peers abroad.

For the opening exhibition, the museum invited onedotzero, a moving image and digital art and design group from the UK, to provide workshops for Chinese artists and students. It also exhibited Chinese digital artists' latest works and documentaries about digital art by the museum.

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New media museum embraces digital art

The China Millennium Monument was an iconic building in Beijing only 11 years ago. Today it serves as a yet another center for art.

The monument's involvement in the arts goes back to 2006, when it opened the World Art Museum to exhibit pieces from the Italian Renaissance. At the beginning of this year, it opened a new contemporary art center to focus on new media works from Chinese and Italian artists.

The newly opened digital art center follows this tradition and strives to connect China's digital artists and art educators with their peers abroad.

"The fast development of technology has sped up the development of society, history and art. We foresee a bright future for digital art, which will become more relevant and accessible through technological advancement," said Chen Caiyun, general manager of CMoDA, at the opening ceremony.

Two years ago, when Chen and her colleagues made documentaries about the creative industry, she realized that art was taking advantage of newer technologies. That experience inspired her to create a new center for digital works.

The six-episode Creative Future documentary series is showing at the opening of the exhibition to capture emerging creative forces and encourage new dialogue about China's own creative future.

In the first episode "Social Media," Chen and her colleagues visit the US, a leader in social media development and entrepreneurship, and talk with innovators in business and education.

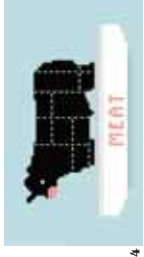
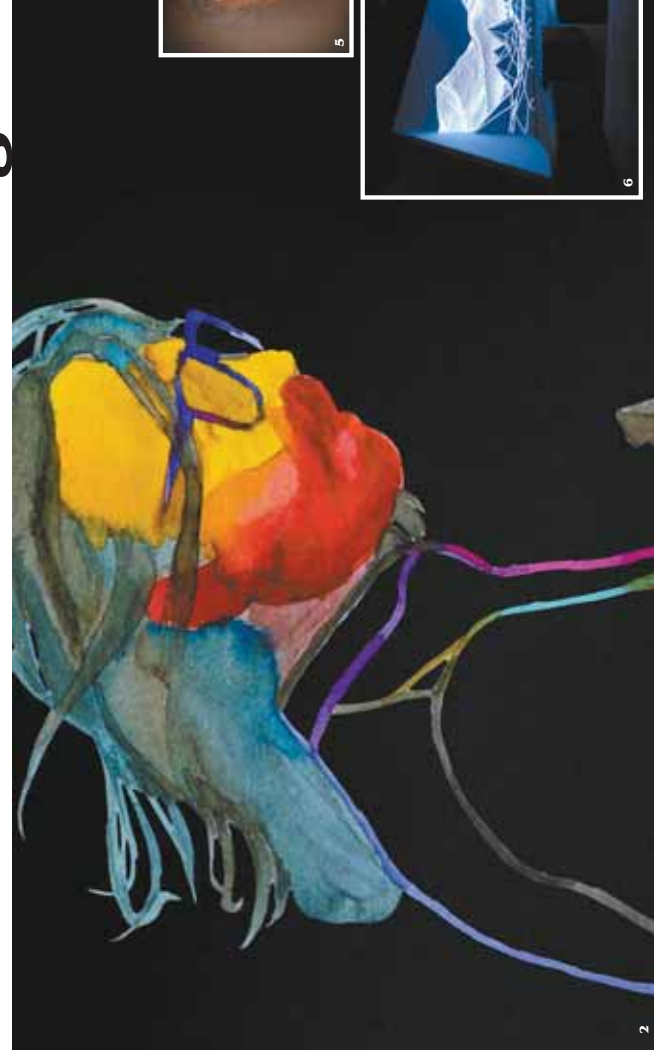
In the second episode, they talk about online and mobile games, as well as video game consoles with game designers in New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo and Helsinki. For the third episode, they meet the staff at Pixar and DreamWorks in Hollywood, as well as the Gundam and Sunrise studios in Tokyo to point out the two directions of animation.

The last episode shows how design changes people's daily life, and the fifth shows how the mind is shaped by the environment and disaster. The final episode shows Chen and her colleagues returning to China to discuss the obstacles and challenges faced by local designers.

"What does it take to be creative? What role will China play? Will it be able to transform itself from a manufacture-based economy to a service and technology-based economy? How can China nurture its own creative class in order to become a leader of the future?" Chen said.

As virtual and augmented realities converge, avatars and new modes of expression are becoming an exploding phenomenon. The opening exhibition, called AV@AR, refers to these changes in digital production, expression and an advanced way of seeing the world through exhibition, film screenings, lectures and workshops.

When Chen made the Creative Future documentary series in London, she met Shane Walter, the co-founder and creative director of onedotzero. Founded in 1996, the organiza-



AV@AR – Opening Exhibition of CMoDA
Where: China Millennium Monument Museum of Digital Arts, B1 Floor, 9A Fuxing Lu, Haidian District
When: Until January 3, 2012, daily except Monday, 10 am – 5 pm
Admission: 15 yuan, free to students, children shorter than 130 centimeters, disabled visitors and seniors who are older than 60 and carry a valid ID
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- 1 Woos by Peipunk
- 2 Baby 1m Yours by Irina Dukava
- 3 The Wonder Hospital by Boomsak
- 4 Stuff & Things by Jack Cunningham
- 5 Paper Plane by Margherita Premuroso
- 6 Eyafjallajökull by Joanne Lemercier
- 7 Joy-Joy Experience by Teewe Graphics
- 8 Mother Of Many by Emma Lazenby
- 9 The Gift by Carl Erik Rausch

Photos provided by CMoDA

2011 is the 100th anniversary of the death of celebrated conductor and controversial composer Gustav Mahler. *Beijing Today* selects three of the year's best books about this late-Romantic Austrian musician.

Strong-willed musician who wrote in his 'own blood'

By Charles Zhu

The extraordinary life and work of Gustav Mahler, a late-Romantic Austrian composer and one of the leading conductors of his generation, is now presented as a more manageable overview in *Gustav Mahler*.

The 700-page book makes a fine alternative to the massive multi-volume biography by Henry-Louis de La Grange.

The new text was written by Jens Malte Fischer, a professor of the theatrical history at the University of Munich and translated from German by Stewart Spencer.

As a composer, Mahler acted as a bridge between the 19th century Austro-German tradition and the modernism of the early 20th century.

Speaking about his own symphonies, *Mahler* once said, "I have written into them, in my own blood, everything that I have experienced and endured."

In the eyes of Romain Rolland, author of *Jean-Christophe*, Mahler was "extraordinarily high-strung, something of the schoolmaster and something of the clergyman," with a "long, clean-shaven face, hair tousled over a pointed skull and receding from a high forehead, eyes constantly blinking behind his glasses, a strong nose, a large mouth with narrow lips, sunken cheeks, and an ascetic, ironic and desolate air."

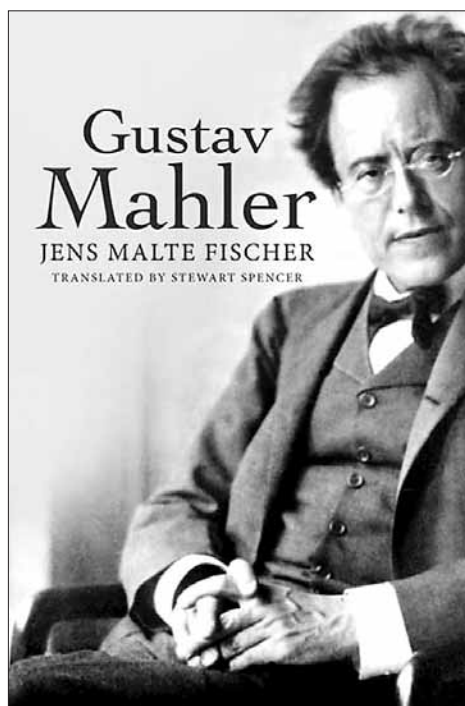
His music is described as idealistic, grotesque, confrontational and confessional. Though he met with

professional, emotional and physical crises, he lived like an artist: no matter how turbulent was the outside world, he remained undisturbed, keeping his creative self true to art throughout to the end of his life.

While in his lifetime his status as a conductor was established beyond question, his own compositions only gained wide popularity after periods of relative neglect, including a ban on its performance in much of Europe during the Nazi era. After 1945, Mahler was rediscovered and championed by a new generation of listeners; he then became one of the most frequently performed and recorded of all composers, a position he has sustained into the 21st century.

Born to humble circumstances in the village of Kalischt, Bohemia, Mahler displayed his musical gifts at an early age.

After graduating from the Vienna Conservatory in 1878, he held a flurry of conducting posts of rising importance in the opera houses of Europe, culminating in his appointment in 1897 as director of the Vienna Court Opera. During his 10 years in Vienna, Mahler converted to Catholicism from Judaism to secure the post and experienced regular opposition and hostility from the anti-Semitic press. Nevertheless, his innovative productions and insistence on "pure music" secured his place as one of the greatest of opera conductors, particularly with his masterful interpretations



Gustav Mahler

By Jens Malte Fischer, 766pp, Yale University Press, \$50

of the operas of Wagner and Mozart.

Mahler's works are mostly in the genres of symphony and song. Most of his 10 symphonies are large productions, with some employing soloists and choirs backed by powerful orchestral forces. These were often controversial when first performed, and were slow to receive critical and popular approval; an exception was the triumphant pre-

miere of his Eighth Symphony, the "Symphony of a Thousand" in 1910.

According to Fischer, Mahler, after completing the work, wrote to one of his friends: "Try to imagine the whole universe beginning to ring and resound. These are no longer human voices, but planets and suns revolving." Fischer says that the work has "the power of the uplift" that "is unforgettable."

Fischer discussed

Mahler's marriage to Alma Schindler. Mahler, then director of the Royal Opera, met and fell in love on November 7, 1901 with "the most beautiful girl in Vienna," Schindler, over dinner at the house of Austrian writer Berta Zuckerkandl. Schindler, who was 19 years his junior, consented to the proposal, and the wedding took place just a few weeks later. She gave to her composer husband the most precious thing she had to offer - her love of music, her own gift as a composer and her social life. However, she was prohibited from composing.

Schindler became an inspiration to her husband, who idolized her. The symphonies of the latter years of his life were unimaginable without Alma. But Mahler's works also smack of his deep-seated Jewishness in every way. His mix of folkloristic elements, light music and great symphonic form made his symphonies unique from other masters.

While Schindler brought a great deal of happiness and domestic stability to him, there was regrettable unconsciousness, on the part of Mahler, of neglect of her needs and growing unhappiness as the latter's memoirs and letters testified. Mahler overlooked or ignored her artistic impulses. This culminated in Mahler's discovery of her liaison with the young architect Walter Gropius while Mahler, gripped by a dying disease, was in great need of affection and care.

In his later years, Mahler went to America for three seasons of conducting. However, instead of being accorded the esteem and fame he deserved, he was belittled and humiliated by New York critics, impresarios and board members who wanted him to share the podium with Toscanini. When he finally returned to Vienna in the spring of 1911, he was ill, unable to stand or walk on his own. He left the world with his Tenth Symphony unfinished, in which he devised an imaginary landscape of loneliness and emotional violence.

Mahler's cause was carried forward by the Second Viennese School, notably Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. Shostakovich and Benjamin Britten were among later 20th-century composers who admired and were influenced by Mahler.

Recent books about Gustav Mahler

The Mahler Album: New, Expanded Edition

By Gilbert Kaplan, 340pp, Abrams, \$50

Selected by Gilbert Kaplan, this is the definitive collection of all known photographs of Mahler's family, his homes, the opera houses in which he worked - including the Metropolitan Opera in New York - and a rich selection of related drawings, paintings and sculptures.

Why Mahler?: How One Man and Ten Symphonies Changed Our World

By Norman Lebrecht, 336pp, Anchor, \$16

By following Mahler's every footstep from birth to grave, scrutinizing his manuscripts and talking to those who knew him, cultural commentator Norman Lebrecht constructs a compelling new portrait of Mahler as a man who lived outside his times.

(By He Jianwei)



Art in world of petty commodities

By He Jianwei

Yiwu, a small city in central Zhejiang Province, is famous for its petty commodity markets. The city itself represents one of the last great bastions of the "Made in China" label, churning out small, cheap, low-tech items produced by surplus labor.

Last Saturday, Yiwu came to the White Box Museum of Art.

The exhibition area took on the look of a small market, and pieces by 60 artists were displaced or obscured by a sea of cheap commodities for the new exhibition Christmas Yiwu.

Christmas Yiwu, an exhibition which deals with the issues of the Yiwu business model, opened at White Box Museum of Art on December 24. The name was devised as a phonetic play on Christmas Eve by curator Dai Zhuoqun.

For a long time, all Chinese business followed the Yiwu model of cheap, counterfeit commodities that were nevertheless labor-intensive to produce.

"[This made] 'Made in China' synonymous with 'sweatshop.' It conjured up images of excessive consumption of natural and human resources to produce low-quality goods that reflected no creativity. The exhibition is a mini experiment to question the Yiwu model," Dai said.

The exhibition presents 100 works by 60 artists on a series of shelves. Each work is smaller than 80 centimeters in length. Participating artists submitted paintings, sculptures and installations, as well as one personal belonging, together with a price tag.

The exhibition is like a tour of a market. Fu Hong displayed the bags that are popular among migrant workers. Dai Hua submitted a plastic pen container with a thermometer. Hou Wen used cheap, man-made crystals to decorate her doll.

Xia Guo used transgenic corns to sculpt a skull. Ai Guo presented several slippers from a producer's warehouse stock.

The materials that the artists selected are cheap on the wholesale market. When used to create art, their price increase several times. "The artists we invited in the exhibition have been recognized by both the market and by critics. It's like brand recognition in business, so the price they command is much higher," the curator said.

Almost a year ago, the curator had an idea to make an exhibition discussing Yiwu's business model. "In recent years, Yiwu has come to sound like a negative word because it is the primary distribution site of many counterfeit products," he said.

"People criticize its lack of creativity. That makes it something for artists to meditate on."



Xia Guo uses transgenic corns to sculpt a skull.



Dai Hua's A Plastic Pen Container with a Thermometer

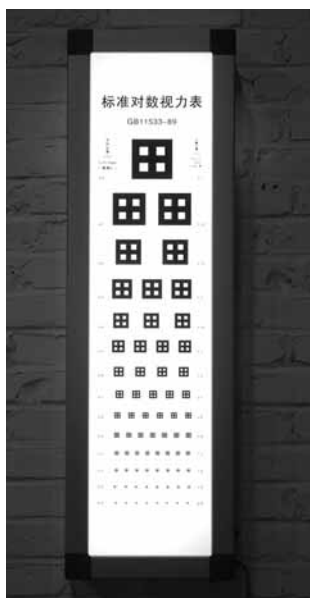


Zhao Zhao's Heart



Wei Jia's Portrait of Spirit

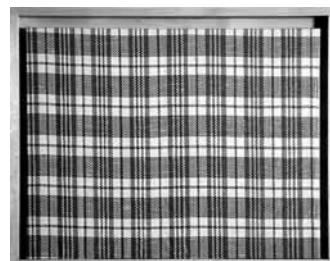
Photos provided by White Box Museum of Art



Hou Yong's Vision Test



Gui Jiafan's painting of Top



Fu Hong displays the bags favored by migrant workers on the move.

Christmas Yiwu (Eve) — A Carnival of Tiny Things in 2012

Where: White Box Museum of Art, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 12, 2012, daily except Monday, 10 am – 5:30 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 5978 4801

International brands sidling up with locals



From brand Ricostru



From brand Chictopia



From brand Ze



From brand This is You'z Clothing

Photos by Chai Studio

By Annie Wei

Marketing to locals is a must for companies who want to enter the Chinese market. The same goes for building a brand.

This week, a high-end Italian online boutique makes its splash with an online store, and a bag brand from Hong Kong presents a limited edition product.

Thecorner.com.cn

Italian companies have been more aggressively entering the Chinese online high-end boutique market in recent years.

A new online store, started in collaboration with *Vogue China*, has begun to sell Chinese and Italian designers' works.

Five designers handpicked by *Vogue China* are featured on the website, where one can purchase items from their fall and winter collections.

Below are two brands we recommend, whose items are more suitable for the petite body type.

Chictopia

This brand was founded by Christine Lau, a young woman born in Beijing who grew up in Hong Kong. At age 18, she went to study in the UK, majoring in textile design from Saint Martins College.

Her first store, Chictopia, was founded in Nanluogu Xiang in 2009, carrying her own designs at reasonable prices, from a few hundred to a thousand yuan.

Lau's design is elegant, feminine and chic in a girlie way. This season's collection features printed patterns, especially big flowers. It'll help one stand out from the winter crowd.

Lau's designs are also available from B.N.C.

Chicpotia

Where: 56 Nanluogu Xiang, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

B.N.C.

Where: B09A, Village North, 19 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 6416 9045

SankuanZ

This brand was established in 2007 on a Taobao store selling designer ShangguanZi's works that cost from 200 to 3,000 yuan.

Shangguan went to school and works in Xiamen, Fujian Province. His designs became popular with many young professionals after a few fashion and lifestyle reporters recommended them.

SankuanZ's clothes are practical and full of details. A red wool scarf costs 199 yuan, and a long, red wool coat is 1,200 yuan.

Website: Sankuanz.taobao.com

Bling-bling a&i messenger bag

The Hong Kong brand a&i – the letters stand for "attention" and "ideas" – showcased a limited-edition messenger bag (799 yuan) at the 22nd International Art Plaza in December.

It's known for being made of recycled safety belts, which are lightweight. The brand also promises products that are wear-resistant and waterproof, so you don't have to worry about using it on a snowy or rainy day.

Where: B1-B161, Xinzhongguan Gouwu Zhongxin, 19 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian District

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 8248 6688



Limited edition messenger bag, 799 yuan

Photo provided by a&i

Local dining expert recommends three restaurants

Delicious Anhui eatery

As one of the country's eight major cuisines, Anhui cuisine is known for its wide selection of seasonal local produce, the use of cooking temperature and a variety of culinary techniques.

Most diners choose Anhui provincial or grand restaurants with traditional wood architecture. The latter is a throwback to the heyday of Anhui merchants and salt traders during the Ming and Qing dynasties, when businessmen from Anhui introduced their food throughout the country.

But the small eatery Lu recommends is out of the limelight. Its interior is very plain, and it has yet to be reviewed on major food websites, such as Dianping.

It is located on the northeast corner of the vegetable and meat market Pingleyuan, near a residential area three kilometers east of Jingsong station on subway Line 10.

Changjiang Jiangzayu (68 yuan) is Lu's go-to dish. Jiangzayu refers to various kinds of small fish along the Yangtze River. In the 1970s and '80s, when the river was still clear, there lived an abundance of fish. The dish offers different types of fish, which have different textures. Fish from the upper Yangtze are tender

and delicate, while fish from the middle parts are leaner, and those in the lower parts are fat.

Lu said jiangzayu isn't always available because Yangtze fish are more scarce these days.

Maya Yaxue, or duck blood (58 yuan), may not be popular among squeamish foreigners, but Lu likes it for its smooth and tender texture.

Hedoufu (16 yuan), sliced tofu soup, is a surprise. While the soup is common in many restaurants, here the soup is prepared with lard. Sliced tofu and deep-fried lard tastes smooth, and is paired with crunchy deep-fried peanuts.

For vegetables, Lu recommends diced parsley, peanuts and dry tofu (18 yuan).

The restaurant has only has three tables in the front room, but regulars normally head straight for private VIP rooms in the back, Lu said.

Xiaohebian Anhuicai

Where: Northeast corner of Pingleyuan market, 29 Xi Dawang Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 9 pm

Cost: Average 80 yuan per person



Duck blood, 58 yuan



Changjiang Jiangzayu, 68 yuan



Food photographer Lu Di

By Annie Wei

For people who like food, interior decoration and attentive service don't matter as much as what comes out on the plate.

Lu Di, a writer and photographer in the local dining scene for eight years, recommends three restaurants that are, in his words, "really tasty and not expensive."

Food

Special regional produce

Lu is from Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, so he knows a thing or two about that region's authentic cuisine. He recommends Guangxi Provincial's Nalan Restaurant.

"When I read reviews of Nalan online, many people said they were disappointed," he said. He thinks that may be because they're not ordering the right dishes.

He suggests starting with huangguapi (18 yuan), cucumber pickle, a special vegetable from Qinzhou, a small city in Guangxi.

Pickles are traditional snacks in Guangxi. The Qinzhou huangguapi is crispy, sour and sweet, and makes a good appetizer.

Lipu yutou (10 yuan per slice), steamed taro, is Lus favorite. Lipu, a small town near Guilin, is famous for

producing quality taros of big sizes. They have a strong aroma, are soft and tastier. Lu said he likes steamed taros. "It's better to steam it before peeling it. The peels can preserve the taro's water, otherwise it will be too dry," Lu said.

Shajiang tuji (78 yuan), free-range chicken in galangal sauce, is a traditional chicken dish enjoyed by people from Guangxi and Guangdong provinces.

Lu said he knows these chickens are from Guangxi, where locals prefer free-range chicken to farmed ones, because the chicken is more tender and soft.

Lu also said the restaurant has the best Guilin rice noodle (8 yuan for small and 15 yuan for big serving) in town. "The sauce is made just right."

Nalan Jiulou

Where: Guangxi Provincial, 26 Panjiayuan Huawei Li, Chaoyang District

Open: 11 am – 9 pm Tel: 6779 6688

Cost: 80 yuan per person



Lipu taro, 10 yuan per slice



Free-range chicken in galangal sauce, 78 yuan



Shrimp ball, 31 yuan

Fish ball, 31 yuan

Handmade meatballs for hotspot

Although the dining scene in Haidian is not as renowned as it is in Chaoyang District, there are plenty of restaurants that offer quality meals on a student budget.

Lu recommends a hotspot restaurant that specializes in handmade meatballs of Chaozhou flavors. Chaozhou, a city in Guangdong is known for its unique cuisines. Meat ball, is one of famous Chao-

zhou street food.

The hotspot soup starts from 20 yuan, while a set menu of beef balls costs only 48 yuan, including soup, beef balls, sliced beef and cabbage.

Lu recommends its baojiang beef balls (18 yuan) and shrimp balls (31 yuan), both fresh, tender, tasty and juicy.

Most vegetable dishes cost 8 yuan per serving.

Weikeduo Chaozhou beef ball hotspot

Where: 49 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian District

Open: 11 am – midnight

Tel: 6257 3789

Cost: Average 30 yuan per person

BEIJING TODAY

Editor: Wei Ying Designer: Deng Ning



Shao Yibei

An eight-hour New Year's celebration

By He Jianwei

A deserted island is commonly invoked as a metaphor for a place where an individual or group finds itself cut off from others. Since 2009, big cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have hosted a "deserted island concert" almost every month, with "deserted island" signifying a niche genre of songs that discuss social issues.

At the end of this year, the concert will feature at least 10 musicians and bands to celebrate New Year's in eight hours at Yugongyishan.

DJ Howie Lee



The opening performance will be from Beijing indie rock band Fuzzy Mood. Bassist Liu Ke and vocalist Han Ai got to know each other on a rock online forum in the summer of 2006. Several months later, they began using the name "Fuzzy Mood" to cover songs by famous rock bands.

Two years later, Liu and Han studied abroad. When they returned to Beijing in 2009, they began to write their own songs. At the same time, guitarist Han Jian joined the band. In the last three months, they recorded the self-produced EP *These Freezing Days*.

It includes five English songs depicting the age of consumerism and loss of souls. In the second song, "F C," they sing, "Everybody wants to be found / Strangers dance beside you when sickness is around / Everybody wants to get lost / Strangers lie beside you when sleeplessness is around / I'm here alone."

This year, they were awarded a contract with one of the biggest indie labels in China, Modern Sky Records, and will release their debut full-length album in 2012.

The independent folk musician Shao Yibei will also play at the concert. She just released her second full-length album last month. Shao became an overnight sensation when her song about left-over women received more than 20 million hits online in 2009.

Unlike other popular online songs, hers do not romanticize love. Shao looks more critically at reality, and her songs depict the sorrow, confusion, hope and expectations of the young generation.

In her debut album, *Stolen Time*, released last year, she looks at current issues of the time and questions problems in reality. For instance, in the song "Who Stole Your Time," she asks who polluted the sky and who believes in money.

In the second album, she also criticizes money grubbers in the song "The Paper Currency Flying in the Wind." She depicts an unscrupulous businessman who produces beverages. "A child buys the beverage he produces. In the hospital, parents are crying. The tough life makes people beyond rational. He consoled himself with the thought that it is a world of the weak falling victim to the strong," she sings.

To build the festive New Year's atmosphere, the organizer has invited two DJs to perform. Howie Lee, an electronic music producer, began his career very young, then majored in audio engineering at the Communication University of China. In 2009, he started making music, integrating various styles such as electro, techno and dubstep.

Jiong Jiong is the other DJ, a resident DJ of White Rabbit. She performs with international DJs almost every week, including Ben Klock, Daniel Bell, Martin Eyerer and Brett Johnson. She combines the glam, the weird and the powerful into her music sets.



Deep Green Sea



Fuzzy Mood



DJ Jiong Jiong

Photos provided by City Pictorial

New Year Celebration Party

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: December 31, 8 pm

Admission: 150 yuan advance purchase, 180 yuan at the door

Tel: 6404 2711

“China Film Archives plays an important role in film archival and research”



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Indie film

Stories in winter

By He Jianwei

Founded in 1958, the China Film Archives plays an important role in film archival and research. It is a treasure house protecting both international and Chinese film history.

The Archives hosts themed monthly screenings. For January, it will select five international films; their stories, classified as romance, science fiction, documentary and war drama, are all set in winter.



The Last Trip (2004)

This docu-drama is based on the life of Norman Winther, a Yukon trapper who lived in the bushland outside of Dawson with his wife.

As a long-time trapper, Winther is used to living without luxury. He has his dogs and he eats what he can catch. His sled is handmade, as are his snowshoes, home and canoe. The leather he uses for clothing is tanned in the traditional method of the Sekani Indians.

Winther hunts and traps lynxes, beavers, martens, wolves and wolverines. Each spring, he goes to Whitehorse or Dawson to sell fur and buy tobacco, ammunition, traps, flour, matches, candles and batteries for his radio. It's the trip he makes, with the only his dogs to keep him company. The animals' silence gives him pause to gaze at the majestic landscapes he crosses.

When: January 6, 7 pm

The Ice Storm (1997)

The film is based on a 1994 novel of the same name by Rick Moody and directed by Taiwanese director Ang Lee. Set on Thanksgiving weekend of 1973, the film looks into the lives of a wealthy Connecticut family who are calm and civil on the outside, but whose lives are quietly falling into chaos.

As the children struggle with adolescence, their parents stumble through sexual experimentation. In the days of Watergate and Vietnam, society is breaking boundaries and ignoring convention. Following suit, these families are eschewing polite barriers and social taboos – with disastrous results.

The film was nominated in the feature film competition of the 1997 Cannes Film Festival and the playwright James Schamus won the award for Best Screenplay.

When: January 12, 7 pm

Merry Christmas (2005)

This film shows the World War I Christmas truce of December 1914 through the eyes of French, Scottish and German soldiers on the Western Front.

As the winter winds began to blow and the soldiers huddle in the trenches to await the delivery of care packages, the sounds of warfare took a momentary backseat to the yearning for brotherhood. It is here that the lives of a French lieutenant, a Scottish priest, a German tenor and a Danish soprano's lives are about to be changed forever.

This film was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 78th Academy Awards.

When: January 13, 7 pm

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District
Admission: 20 yuan for each film
Tel: 5900 9473

Mt. Tsurugidake (2009)

Set at the end of the Meiji Era (1868-1912), this historical film is based on a mountaineering novel by Naoki Prize-winning writer Nitta Jiro. It tells the true story of a survey team that risked their lives to map Mt. Tsurugidake in the Japanese Alps during the early 20th century.

Tsurugidake has been considered a formidable mountain since the earliest records. Once considered a deity in its own right by those engaged in mountain asceticism-shamanism, it has also been called "needle mountain" or "the mountain of death."

But the men who stake their lives on this impossible mapping mission are after neither fame nor fortune – only a desire to map the unknown. This true story gives a frank look at the noble spirit of devotion and gradually becoming lost in modern Japan.

When: January 19, 7 pm

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)

This American romantic science fiction film, starring Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Kirsten Dunst, Mark Ruffalo and Tom Wilkinson, explores the nature of memory and romantic love.

Joel Barish is stunned to discover that his girlfriend Clementine Kruczynski has had the memories of their tumultuous relationship erased. Out of desperation, he contacts the inventor of the process, Dr. Howard Mierzwiak, to have Kruczynski removed from his own memory. But as Barish's memories progressively disappear, he begins to discover their earlier passion.

The film won the 2004 Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

When: January 20, 7 pm

BEIJING TODAY

Editors: Zhang Dongya Zhao Hongyi Designer: Zhao Yan

Popular skating rinks in town

By Zhang Dongya

Whether you're looking for a few laps around the ice or a game of hockey, we have your guide for the places to skate this winter.



Skating can be family fun for those who aren't afraid of the cold.

CFP Photos



Ice hockey is beginning to become popular among Beijing's youth.



A safe way to get around the ice: on wooden seats



Ice water swimming is another alternative winter sport for the truly thick-skinned.

Childhood fun at Shichahai outdoor rink

Lakes have frozen a bit later this year than in the past, creating some anxiety among the city's skating enthusiasts.

But they'll have to wait no longer. Last weekend, a big part of Shichahai Lake opened to the public as an outdoor ice rink. It should be the largest skating rink in town.

You can rent skates, shoes and sleds (more like modified chairs on which people sit and slide). Many youngsters come to play hockey as well.

Some vendors, without the luxury of skates, carefully walk on the ice to sell colorful pinwheels, balloons and shuttlecocks.

Even beginners to skating will find this lake enjoyable, as there's enough space to avoid others and go at your own pace.

Where: Opposite the north gate of Beihai Park, Ping'an Dajie, Xicheng District
Getting there: Take Bus 13, 42, 107, 111, 118, 701, 810, 824 or 850 to Beihai Beimen

Open: 10 am - 5 pm
Tel: 8401 8677, 5166 4500
Admission: 10 yuan

Outdoor rink in Wangjing

A skating rink opened at the New World in Wangjing area last Friday, offering urbanites another place to enjoy the winter. The rink, located at the entrance of the shopping mall, has the feel of a child's wonderland.

The rink is relatively small, with a surface area of 300 square meters.

Skates are available for rental. The rink is scheduled to stay open until the end of February.

Where: New World Department Store, 16 Guangshun Nan Dajie, Wangjing, Chaoyang District

Getting there: Take Bus 101, 111, 131, 404, 421, 627, 629, 656 or 696 to Wangjing

Open: 10 am - 9:30 pm

Tel: 8476 4567

Admission: 10 yuan for 90 minutes

Solana's All Star club

The All Star Skating Club, located in Solana, was founded

by Olympic gymnast and Chinese sporting icon Li Ning. The rink is a huge at 2,000 square meters, though only two-fifths of it is covered with ice.

The club's trainers are former professional ice skaters.

The rink is equipped with first-class lighting and acoustics, which creates a dreamy, movie-like atmosphere.

The club also has a store that sells professional-level skates, attire, ice hockey equipment, kneepads and gloves.

Where: VD1-36, Solana, 6 Chaoyang Guangyuan Lu, Chaoyang District

Getting there: Take Subway Line 10 to Liangmaqiao station, or take Bus 419, 852 or 985 to Zaoying Beili stop

Tel: 5905 6328

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Admission (for 90 minutes):

Weekdays except Friday, 10 am - 6 pm: 30 yuan; 6-10 pm: 40 yuan; Friday, weekends and holidays: 50 yuan

Continued on page 21...

...continued from page 20



Kids of all ages can enjoy the ice.



Slipping and sliding



Are we having fun yet?

CFP Photos

Old rink at New World

New World Department Store has a big basement-level skating rink, measuring 1,700 square meters, with about half of it ice. Opened in 2000, it is one of Beijing's first indoor skating rinks and boasts the most regular customers.

It provides one-on-one training for youngsters, mainly in hockey and figure skating. Students flood the rink on weekends, when it's common to see 4- to 12-year-olds in skating costumes. It has handrails for beginners and benches for observers.

The admission includes skate rental.

The rink has more than a hundred lockers for customer use, though there's a 10-yuan deposit.

Where: B1 New World Department Store, 5 Chongwenmen Wai Dajie, Chongwen District

Getting there: Take Subway Line 2 or 5 to Chongwenmen station, or take Bus 9, 43, 673 or 729 to Chongwenmen Xi stop

Open: 9:30 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 6708 6481

Admission (90 minutes): Weekdays, 9:30-11:30 am: 25 yuan; 11:30 am – 5 pm: 35 yuan; 5-9:30 pm: 40 yuan; weekends and holidays, 45 yuan

Le Cool's tranquil surroundings

Le Cool, located at China World Shopping Mall, has a relaxing atmosphere unlike most indoor rinks. It's open all year and is packed during the winter.

The rink is popular among children and young adults, usually office employees who work for companies located around the mall.

During the day, sunshine streams in from the glass ceiling;

at night, the moon, stars and city lights illuminate the 800-square-meter rink.

The rink calls itself environmentally friendly as it shuns the use of fluorine, a freezing agent that is harmful to the ozone layer.

Skates are available and included in the admission. Trainers roam the ice, prepared to give tips and a hand to people on shaky legs.

Beside the rink are fast-food eateries like Subway, where people can take a breather.

Where: B2 China World Shopping Mall, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Getting there: Take Subway Line 1 to Guomao station, or take Bus 9, 502 or 976 to Dabeiyao stop

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 6505 5776

Admission (90 minutes):

Weekdays except Friday, 10 am – 6 pm: 30 yuan; 6-10 pm: 40 yuan; Friday, weekends and holidays: 50 yuan

Other skating rinks in town Xiyue Rink in Xidan

Where: B3 Xidan Cultural Center, 180 Xidan Bei Dajie, Xicheng District

Open: 10 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 6602 0050

Admission: Weekdays, 10 am – 4 pm: 35 yuan (including skate rental); 4-9:30 pm: 45 yuan; weekends and holidays, 45 yuan

Champion Rink at Jinyuan

Where: B2 New Yansha Shopping Mall, 1 Yuanda Lu, Haidian District

Open: 10 am – 9:30 pm

Tel: 8887 4899

Admission: Weekdays, 10-11:30 am: 30 yuan; 11:30 am – 5 pm: 40 yuan; 5-9:30 pm: 50 yuan; weekends and holidays, 50 yuan

Tips

1. Wear extra clothing, even indoors, since rinks keep a lower temperature than the rest of the mall.
2. Bring gloves or mittens, since some rinks require them.
3. Food is not allowed inside most rinks.
4. Most rinks cannot be held liable for injuries, so be careful, especially when the place becomes crowded. Do not try fancy tricks if you have not received training.

Dragon commemoratives attract gold shoppers

By Zhou Ying

With the lunar year winding to a close, the market is seeing its first gold and silver products themed for the coming Year of the Dragon.

Jewelries and coins with dragon themes have made early appearances at gold stores, attracting many customers. With the gold price rising, many are forecasting a rush on gold and silver jewelry across the country.

Luck of the dragon

The dragon, as a mythical creature, symbolizes power and might and was represented by the emperor in feudal times. The dragon is believed to exercise a potent and auspicious influence, especially over water and rainfall.

Dragons come in many forms. The typical yellow or gold dragon is traditionally associated with the emperor.

It is often described as having the head of a camel, the horns of a deer, the eyes of a hare, the ears of a bull, the neck of a snake, the belly of a frog, the scales of a carp, the claws of an eagle and the paws of a tiger. While most dragons lack wings, they can still fly.

Depictions of dragons are accompanied by clouds, even if only in stylized form. In many Chinese dialects, the words for clouds and fortune are homonyms – a reminder that the beasts of the heavens are also bringers of good fortune.

The number of claws is important to notice. A five-clawed dragon could only be used by the emperor. Imperial nobles and high-ranking officials could use the image of a four-clawed dragon. The three-clawed beast was available only to deserving members of the public.

In feudal times, the use of a five-clawed dragon by anyone other than the emperor was a capital offense that carried the penalty of death to the offender's entire clan.

To mark this year of the dragon, the world's mints have devoted the past six months to ensuring a vast flow of Water Dragons from their presses. In addition to coins, the Philippine Postal Corporation recently released two dragon-themed commemorative stamps.

"There is always a big demand for our New Year's stamps, because the designs change according to the year of the Chinese calendar. For 2012, it's the Year of the Dragon, so our designs are dragons," said Philpost Philatelic Division chief Elenita San Diego.



Dragon-themed home accessories for the Chinese New Year are available in Beijing's shops. CFP Photo

Higher profile

Chinese media reported that many customers shopping at Caibai Jewelry in Beijing went specifically to buy the year's new gold bars and coins.

A salesperson told a reporter from *Economic Daily* that the sales of New Year gold bars were brisk, and that the bars could both keep their value and demonstrate rich cultural content and superb craftsmanship.

There are gold bars with colorful patterns, which are more elegant and expensive. One gold bar for the Year of the Dragon that went on sale in November has been especially popular: thousands of bars were ordered more than a year in advance.

For 2012, the China Gold Coin Incorporation (CGCI) issued gold bars in five sizes: 1,000 grams, 500 grams,

200 grams, 100 grams and 50 grams, issued in 350, 1,000, 1,500, 16,000 and 24,600 pieces, respectively. The dragon series from CGCI has a purity of 99.99 percent and a total issuing weight of 3,980 kilograms.

The gold price for CGCI bars is expected to be 435 yuan per gram, the highest in its history.

Gold and silver bars by the China Dragon Postage Stamps, co-produced by the Service Center of the Palace Museum and China Gold Group, premiered at Gongmei on December 2.

The patterns are based on the rare five-cent postage stamp and made in the original colors of gold and silver.

The bars feature large and small dragons, as well as coiled dragons, and are on sale at branches and subsidiaries of the Bank of China,

China Merchants Bank and Bank of Communications.

In addition to New Year's gold bars, the precious metal memorial badges are also attracting great attention. The China Gold Coin Incorporation released a series of 31 "2012 Dragon Year Precious Metal Memorial Badges" in 22 sizes and shapes.

There are gold badges, silver badges, gold and silver mixed badges and platinum badges. Prices range from 400 to 400,000 yuan.

Investing in demand

The gold and silver bars have two functions: collection and investment, said Zhen Weigang, president of Guangdong Yuebao Gold Investment.

The appreciation potential for these costly commemoratives has been demonstrated in their issuing prices throughout the last decade.

"Ten years ago, the issuing price of the gold bars for Year of the Goat was 110 yuan per gram. This year, the Year of the Dragon bars are selling for 435 yuan per gram. What other products or industries have such a high growth rate?" he said.

But there are plenty of gold investment products on the market. Which is best for investment?

Money management experts suggest that purchases be made based on your own need. Wang Jian, vice



Gold and silver pieces from China Dragon Postage Stamps

Photos provided by Zhou Ying

president of Beijing Gongmei Group, said that when the only concern is investment, gold and silver bars make great first choices. The potential for silver investment is especially high.

However, gold being purchased for a gift should meet the needs of the recipient. The choice can be influenced by personal tastes, such as products with good craftsmanship or which have been created by an unusual process of pressing or casting.

Cost effectiveness should be an important factor. While gold and silver coins are undoubtedly good investments, a gold coin weighing 1/10 the of a troy ounce costs between 3,000 and 4,000 yuan. That can be quite expensive for the investor on a budget.

As for collection, Wang Jian suggests that prior consideration should be given to themes of historic events. Past commemoratives have included a panda coin, a coin marking the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and a coin marking the 100th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution.

Works designed by celebrated artists and issued by an authoritative organization such as the China Gold Coin Incorporation are usually the best investments, as are those produced in limited runs. Rarity always commands a higher price.

For consumers choosing Chinese New Year products as gifts for family and friends, Li Hengdi, president of Golden Peak Group, suggests they should choose ones produced in a limited quantity by a well-known brand, and that are priced reasonably close to the market value of gold or silver.

Hotel

Swissotel Beijing named best 'Guest Experience' 2011

Swissotel Beijing Hong Kong Macau Center has been named the Best Guest Experience Hotel 2011.

Presented at the 2011 China Travel Service Award, the award recognizes Chinese hotels that offer outstanding hospitality service, diverse designs and contemporary Swiss attributes.

The Travel Services Awards 2011, organized by Sohu and Sina Travel with the help of leading market research group Ipsos, were based on a two-month poll that solicited one million votes and the opinions of 22 tourism experts. There were 209 enterprises and institutions among the shortlisted candidates.

Also presented was the "Service Award," which recognizes the annual level of service and reviews innovations and emerging businesses within the industry.

More than 300 people attended the annual tourism talks which focused this year on business-leisure travel.



Christmas charity events of Park Plaza Beijing Science Park

Hotel managers from Park Plaza Beijing Science Park visited Daxing Dandelion School last week and spent a memorable afternoon celebrating an early Christmas with 40 students.

General Manager Terry Manns and Santa Claus presented Christmas gifts and cookies to each student. The hotel also donated 100 knitted gloves and 50 calendars, which will be distributed to students whose families are

struggling financially.

During the event, the hotel's executive chef, Tony, held a cooking demonstration that taught how to make French crepes. The students sang a Christmas carol and wrote their New Year's wishes on handmade cards. The cards will be displayed on the Christmas tree at the hotel.

On December 19, hotel staff visited Haidian Special School which specializes in education and training of children with cognitive disabilities. Around 40 students celebrated Christmas by sharing the cookies and cakes from the hotel.

The hotel has supported Haidian Special School since the end of 2009, and will continue to support it in the future.



New Year's donation campaign by Sunworld Dynasty Hotel

To celebrate the coming new year, general manager Ken Tang and other managers of Sunworld Dynasty Hotel Beijing went to Waikoquan Village Primary School in Xuanhua County, Hebei Province.

The group donated 1,000 books, seven computers, four multifunction recorders and a variety of stationery, balls and chess sets to 179 children from low-income families. Tang said he and the other managers hope the students can enjoy a warm winter and New Year's blessings.

Airline



Jetstar enters Guangzhou with guaranteed low fares

Jetstar is marking the end of another year of record growth in Asia with the commencement of direct daily services to Singapore from Guangzhou.

Guangzhou is the seventh mainland Chinese market opened by Jetstar and consolidates the carrier's focus on serving the South China market.

Jetstar already operates low-fare services from Haikou, Shantou and Guilin in Southern China, along with flights to Hong Kong.

Jetstar Group CEO Bruce Buchanan said 2012 was expected to continue the strong momentum for Jetstar's footprint in the China market.

"We are now the largest low-cost carrier between Singapore and China, with the launch of Guangzhou following other new flights this year to Beijing, Ningbo and Hangzhou. Jetstar brings fresh competition for Chinese travelers. We will not be beaten on price. All our fares on the Singapore to Guangzhou route are covered by our famous Price Beat Guarantee," Buchanan said.

Jetstar Asia CEO Chong Phit Lian, who joined the full inaugural flight to Guangzhou, said Jetstar's growth in China in 2011 was very strong.

Jetstar announced it was making a 20,000 yuan donation to Sina's Yangfan Book Project, which provides books to underprivileged children in remote areas of Guangdong Province.

"It is the season of giving, and there is no better way to celebrate our Guangzhou inaugural flight than to give back to this community which is so important to Jetstar," Chong said.

Dinning

Event

Hiking and ski trips

Culture Yard hosts a variety of outdoor activities each month for anyone who wants a weekend escape. Check out its monthly calendar to see what suits your interests.

Planned day trips includes hikes on the Great Wall, trips through the Silver Pagoda Forest and ski runs down the beautiful slopes of Jundushan or Yunfoshan. There's something for everyone!

Check out the website cultureyard.net for information on Culture Yard's next day trip!

Start your Year of the Dragon at Scene a Café

Scene a Café offers Beijing's most irresistible buffet: a selection of succulent seafood such as steamed scallops, Australian tiger crabs, New Zealand oysters, mussels and blue crabs, as well as traditional dumplings, Chinese noodles and double-boiled soups. The buffet includes free soft drinks.

Where: China World Hotel, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: All nights except Fridays
Cost: 298 yuan per adult (15 percent gratuity)

Tel: 6505 2266 ext. 35, 6505 5838

(By Jackie Zhang)





Fri, Dec. 30

Nightlife

Island

The new classical musician Ding Ke released his first full-length album, *Island*, in March under the label Modern Sky Records. This is his first show in Beijing since the release.

Where: Mako Livehouse, 36 Guangqu Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 60 yuan advance purchase, 80 yuan at the door

Tel: 5205 1112

Movie

Sense and Sensibility (1995)

Directed by Ang Lee, this British film is based on the 1811 novel of the same name by English novelist Jane Austen, starring Kate Winslet and Hugh Grant.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 5900 9473

Sat, Dec. 31



Nightlife

Terry Hsieh Collective

This jazz band was founded by music students from Oberlin Conservatory and is led by trombonist Terry Hsieh. They carry on the tradition of American classical music.

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiadaokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm

Admission: 40 yuan

Tel: 6401 5269

Movie

Accomplices (2009)

This French thriller coils through two stories. The film opens with a corpse floating in the Seine. The body belongs to a young man who loved a young woman and led her into his dangerous world. The other story involves two police inspectors investigating the murder.

Where: French Cultural Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang District

When: 3 pm

Admission: 20 yuan, includes cup of tea

Tel: 6553 2627



Sun, Jan. 1

Movie

Letter from an Unknown Woman (2004)

Adapted from Stefan Zweig's novella of the same name, this Chinese film is about a renowned writer who receives a

letter from an unknown woman on his birthday in the winter of 1948 in Beijing. The woman recounts a relationship the writer has forgotten.

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, north section of Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 4 pm

Admission: 40 yuan

Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8001

Mon, Jan. 2

Concert

Ode to Joy

The Beethoven Orchestra Bonn will perform Joseph Haydn's Cello Concerto No. 1 in C Major and Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 9

in D Minor under the leadership of its director, Stefan Blunier.

Where: Concert Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District

When: 7:30 pm

Admission: 200-880 yuan

Tel: 6436 8998



Tue, Jan. 3



Exhibition

Cloak & Dagger – Kid Acne Solo Exhibition

This exhibition presents works by English artist Kid Acne, creating a world through graffiti, painting, installation and video. The exhibition title, *Cloak & Dagger*, is translated word for word in order to give an iconic outline of his Stabby Women, the characters created in his short action films. They are vigorous and charming tribeswomen in modern metropolis. In Acne's opinion, the title is also a metaphor for artistic creation.

Where: Other Gallery, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until January 29, 2012, daily except Monday,

10:30 am – 6 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 6431 9684

Wed, Jan. 4

Exhibition

As It Is – Hong Hao Solo Exhibition

This exhibition presents installations by Hong Hao, who collects invoices, old calendars, maps and posters from the flea market.

Where: Beijing Commune, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until February 26, daily except Monday, 11 am – 7 pm

Admission: Free

Tel: 8456 2862

Thu, Jan. 5



Movie

Poppoya (1999)

This Japanese film is about an aging railroad conductor who devotes his life to making trains run promptly in the formerly prosperous mining town of Horomai.

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District

When: 7 pm

Admission: 20 yuan

Tel: 5900 9473

(By He Jianwei)